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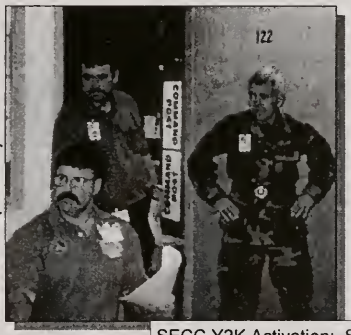
Newsletter

March 2000
Volume 48 Number 3

Administrator's Note

We hope everyone who attended the 33rd annual Governor's Conference for Emergency Preparedness found it worthwhile and stimulating. Planning for next year's conference will begin this spring and we will be focusing on current issues, as well as striving to make further improvements overall. Our many thanks to all who helped make it a success.

New Year's Eve preparations for Y2K turned out to be a positive exercise for us. We adjusted several operating procedures and every staff member had a role. Fortunately, the feared computer glitch did not manifest itself significantly. This truly turned out to be an opportunity to become better prepared.



SECC Y2K Activation: Steve Hester, Steve Knecht and General Prendergast monitor events as the world transitions into the new millenium.

This spring, should we prepare for floods, fires, or both? There aren't many folks around who are willing to stick their neck out and make a prediction. The unusually warm winter does make one wonder about what will happen this spring and summer. It would be prudent for all of us to pay attention to short and long-term weather implications and be ready to react no matter what happens.

> ...should we prepare for floods, fires, or both?

I hope you have a safe and enjoyable Montana spring.

Jim Greene
DES Administrator

Spring Edition

STATE OF MONTANA
DISASTER & EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Editor Notes

Wow!! So many things have happened since the last newsletter. Y2K, the Governor's Conference, cyber terrorism events, presidential candidate debates - even the stock market has seen a correction. Due to all that has been happening, I didn't expect to have much information for this edition of our newsletter; however, I was pleasantly surprised. I received some wonderful articles, some really great photographs, and, of course the fun stuff that makes life a little more interesting. You shouldn't have any trouble finding something you enjoy or something that helps you grow both personally and professionally.

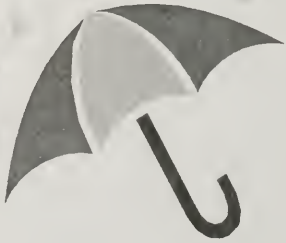
With everything you are tasked to do, I must commend you on your efforts to make our newsletter a success. Thank you so much for your contributions and for the time you take to read this publication. I receive feedback from all across the state, (and even some from other states!) regarding the information we share. Your contributions are helping us all become better and more productive emergency managers.

Congratulations and keep up the great work!!

Until Next Time!
Monique T. Lay
Newsletter Editor

People may doubt what you say, but they will always believe what you do.

Thank you to the following for contributing to this newsletter:
Jim Greene, Marlys Cain, Homer Young, Norm Parrent, Bill Thomas, Doug Weber - U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Leigh Spencer - PTA, Fred Naeher, Cindy Mullaney, Larry Akers, Steve Knecht, WSSPC, Wilma Puich, Dave Maser, and the Fire Services Training Newsletter.



My Thanks to You

Since the opportunity did not present itself during the 2000 Governor's Conference for me to "have my say," I am taking this means to do so.

For 23 years I have had the privilege of serving as your Association Secretary/Treasurer and for this I say "Thank You." I thank you for electing me year after year and for placing your trust in me to do the job. It's really hard to believe. It seems like only yesterday I walked into a room of six or seven coordinators in the fall of 1976 in Livingston and walked out charged with writing a set of by-laws and serving as the secretary of a newly formed organization.

During the first years of the Association our concerns were primarily to support the United States Civil Defense Council and their activities. Little attention was paid to the Montana membership, or lack of it, or to our State/Local working relationships. Many of us traveled to all parts of the country to support the cause of U.S.C.D.C. The good thing about this activity was that many of friendships developed then are still in place now. That's the wonderful thing about our profession. We are constantly meeting new people who have the same problems, the same concerns, the same goals thus these wonderful friendships are developed. I have often said that it is these friendships that have kept me in the program for so many years.

Eventually under the guidance of C.L. Gilbertson, a former State DES Administrator, we started to change our focus and work towards getting Montana stronger through memberships and to establish a good state/local working relationship. It took a long time to accomplish but I truly feel that we now have at least accomplished these two important goals.

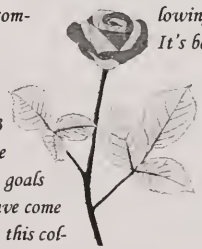
I can't say enough about the past presidents who represented the Association the past 23 years. Without the generosity of all of these individuals giving their time to achieve the goals of our Association we would never have come so far. There is not enough room in this column to recognize each individually, but I am certainly grateful for their support. I would be remiss if I did not mention the enormous guidance, assistance and support I received from these past presidents. They were a unique group of people but oh so wonderful to work for.

I have come to see our membership grow to now represent 50 of our 56 counties with other emergency management agencies paying dues in support of our cause. We are now asked to have representation on other boards, committees, task forces etc. Most other organizations in the state know who we are and what we do. We truly have come a long way. Still there is work to do but I know that you will all continue to strive to continue to make this organization the best, the biggest, the most respected, and the most productive one in the state.

Together, we have accomplished a lot over the past years. I won't bore you with the details, but I will always look back and be proud of the accomplishments we have made over the last twenty-three years as a team. Granted we have had our disagreements but those same disagreements usually work to make the organization stronger.

The best part of the job of secretary/treasurer was getting the pleasure of meeting and talking with all of you in person, over the phone and at all the state, district and executive board meetings. This was "my fun time."

I will continue to promote the Association as the true emergency management organization in Montana. Once again, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to serve you for these past 23 years. It's been an effort of love.



God bless each of you.

Wilma Puich
Past Secretary/Treasurer

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
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Lincoln County
Office of Emergency Management

Acknowledging County Excellence

The State DES Office has awarded Charlie Comer, Lincoln County Office of Emergency Management, an ACE Certificate for his outstanding efforts with his county program and Project Impact extravaganza. Great Job, Charlie!!

Several years ago, internationally respected disaster researcher Dr. Thomas Drabek conducted a study of professional emergency managers and concluded that the attributes most common to exceptional emergency managers are commitment, credibility and tenacity. Charlie Comer exemplifies those qualities.

Charlie was appointed Lincoln County Emergency Manager in 1996.

Many readers of this newsletter will know that Lincoln County was designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the first Project Impact community in Montana and one of the first in the nation. Charlie would insist that the success of the program is due to the many partners which have contributed so much; however, Charlie was and is the catalyst that keeps the program flourishing. All you have to do is pick any day of the week and try to keep up with him to appreciate his knowledge of and dedication to emergency management.

In addition to the many projects undertaken in the name of Project Impact, Charlie has created and trained an emergency management team which has guided the cities and county through numerous significant incidents including floods, blizzards, windstorms, ice jams, and wildfires.

A short list of some recent accomplishments include:

- Installation of an early warning system which consists of a combination of sirens, AM radio transmitters/recorders and stream and dam failure gauges.
- Development and testing of school plans.
- Mailing of an "Emergency Planning Guide" to all Lincoln County citizens.
- Instruction of ICS to approximately 400 emergency responders and department personnel
- Helped acquire approximately $700,000 worth of commitment from various community businesses and other local organizations.
- Development of a local emergency management website.
- Application for and receipt of several grants from a variety of sources.
- Conducted a building collapse class with world class instructors.
- Helped coordinate a complex, experimental floodplain management program.

Charlie's list of future and continuing projects is just as ambitious as what has already been accomplished.

Charlie is always willing to share his successes (and some frustrations) with fellow emergency managers and is currently on the Governor's Conference working team.

The following information is condensed from a Western News article from Libby:

Early Warning System

...in place in Libby

The early warning system for Lincoln County is up and running, according to Charlie Comer, Coordinator of the Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency. Four sirens were placed at four locations around the county; two in Libby and one each in Troy and Eureka.

"If people hear the sirens it's a warning to tune into the radio station and listen what to do," Comer said.

The sirens are programmed to sound off and alert the community when there is a flood, fire, earthquake or other emergency. Along with the sirens, a commercial radio transmitter broadcasts weather and road reports, smoke management warnings and other incidents that might affect the county. "If people hear the sirens it's a warning to tune into the radio station and listen what to do," Comer said. The system is also tied into stream gauges and can send warnings to the Sheriff's Office which can then activate the sirens.

The sirens will be tested monthly. The project was funded partly by Project Impact. Local businesses, utilities and individuals also made significant donations of time and materials to the project. This is just one of many emergency management related projects undertaken recently in Lincoln County. Lincoln County, Eureka and Troy can be proud of what they've accomplished.

Nomination & Articles Submitted by:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Representative

The ACE Award was developed to highlight efforts made by the counties to improve emergency management within their jurisdictions. Any contribution made to enhancing any phase within the cycle of emergency management qualifies for a nomination. If you know someone, or a group of individuals, who are providing outstanding services and making extraordinary efforts within their counties, let us know. If you feel you are doing exceptional work, nominate yourself. We would be honored to recognize all of your hard work and want to share ideas and accomplishments with other counties.

New High-Speed HAZUS Released

Immediately following an earthquake, individuals involved in earthquake preparedness, planning, and response will now be able to save valuable time when assessing damage and determining appropriate response as the result of work just completed for FEMA under a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS).

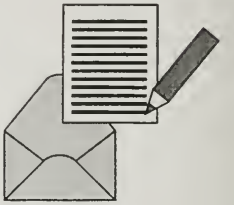
HAZUS (short for "Hazards U.S.), a state-of-the-art computer program developed by NIBS to provide loss estimations following an earthquake, has been upgraded and is now significantly faster and can provide more detailed information in just minutes following a quake. The new edition - HAZUS99 - is available from FEMA and NIBS and is free of charge to all federal, state, and local agencies and other public and private organizations.

The program is designed to aid not only response and recovery, but also preparedness and mitigation, through the creation of earthquake scenarios. HAZUS99 is a nationally applicable, standardized method for estimating earthquake losses at the community or regional level. It is available on CD-ROM in three editions: Eastern U.S., Central U.S., and Western U.S. Each CD includes a tutorial and an "Inventory Collection Tool." The program will be available to work with either MapInfo or ArcView GIS software.

CD ROMs containing data for earthquake, wind, and flood exposure analysis are being prepared for each state. FEMA is expanding the capabilities of HAZUS by developing loss estimation models for flood and hurricane hazards, and preview versions of these models are being prepared for release in 2002.

For more information, contact:
Philip Schneider
NIBS Multi-hazard Loss Estimation Program
1090 Vermont Avenue, N.W. - Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005-4905

(202) 289-7800
fax: (202) 289-1092
e-mail: pschneider@nibs.org
WWW: http://www.nibs.org



<<OR>>

Claire Drury
FEMA HAZUS Project Manager
500 C Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20472
(202) 646-2884
e-mail: claire.drury@fema.gov

Submitted by WSSPC:
Western States Seismic Policy Council

To utilize HAZUS in your county, contact Jens Bolstad (406) 841-3955 or Monique Lay (406) 841-3963. We can run a scenario for you or set you up with the program.

I was recently reading the MT Department of Transportation newsletter "Newsline" and came across some information on the availability of county maps. They are general highway maps which show public roads on a land grid of township, range and section lines. Surface types are shown for all roads. The maps also indicate cities, towns, national forests, federal reservations, game refuges, lakes, reservoirs, streams, railroads and mountain peaks with elevations. The maps can be viewed using a portable document format file such as Acrobat at www.mdt.state.mt.us under "County Maps".

Hard copies of maps are also available. They offered to send me two copies of maps that are 24" x 18" at no charge. Jim Erickson is the contact person - his number is 444-6119.

Apparently they also plan on having maps of Montana's urban areas and incorporated cities and towns available in the near future.

Submitted by:
Cindy Mullaney
Pondera County DES

EARTHQUAKE HOW-TO

Teaching the public about earthquake hazards is much more complicated than simply telling folks to drop, cover, and hold. Many organizations have struggled to develop programs that address seismic hazards, although little knowledge was available concerning what works and what hinders successful teaching about these risks. The latest issue of the "Natural Hazards Informer" contains the collective wisdom of some of the top earthquake educators in the U.S. "Public Education for Earthquake Hazards," by Sarah Nathe, Paula Gori, Marjorie Greene, Elizabeth Lemersal, and Dennis Mileti, discusses why it is important to educate the public about earthquakes, why people pay attention to earthquake preparedness information and why they don't, what activities have worked in educating the public, windows of opportunity for creating "educable moments," how to prepare effective messages, and how to disseminate those messages for the greatest effect. It also lists resources for further guidance. This second issue in the new "Informer" series from the Natural Hazards Center is now available on-line and in downloadable PDF format from the center Web page:http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/informer/.

Received by WSSPC:
Western States Seismic Policy Council

Did you know?

- Coca Cola was originally green.
- Every day more money is printed for monopoly than the US Treasury.
- Men can read smaller print than women,women can hear better than men.
- Cost of raising a medium sized dog to the age of 11: $6,400.
- Average number of people airborne over the U.S. during any given hour: 61,000.
- The world's youngest parents were 8 and 9 and lived in China in 1910.
- The youngest Pope was 11 years old.
- First novel ever written on a typewriter: Tom Sawyer
- The San Francisco Cable cars are the only mobile National Monuments.
- Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history:
  Spades-King David,
  Clubs-Alexander the Great,
  Hearts-Charlemagne, and
  Diamonds-Julius Caesar.
- 111,111,111 x 111,111,111 = 12,345,678,987,654,321.

- Only two people signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, John Hancock and Charles Thomson. Most of the rest signed on August 2, but the last signature wasn't added until five years later.
- "I am." is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.
- The Interstate system was designed so that one mile in every five must be straight. These straight sections are usable as airstrips in times of war or other emergencies. The Interstate's official name is The National Defense Highway System.
- The cruise liner Queen Elizabeth II, moves only six inches for each gallon of fuel that it burns.
- The nursery rhyme Ring Around the Rosey is a rhyme about the bubonic plague.
  Infected people with the plague would get red circular sores (Ring around the Rosey...). These sores would smell very bad so people would hide flowers on their bodies in an attempt to mask the smell ("pocket full of posies..."). People who died from the plague would be burned to reduce the spread of the disease ("ashes, ashes, we all fall down").

- Q: What occurs more often in December than any other month?
  A: Conception.
- Q: What separates "60 Minutes" on CBS from every other TV show?
  A: No theme song.
- Q: Half of all Americans live within 50 miles of what?
  A: Their birthplace.
- Q: What do bullet proof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers all have in common?
  A: All invented by women.
- Q: What is the only food that doesn't spoil?
  A: Honey.
- Q: There are more collect calls made on this day than any other.
  A: Father's Day.
- Q: What trivia fact about Mel Blanc (the voice of Bugs Bunny) is most ironic?
  A: He was allergic to carrots.

Received by:
Fred Naeher
Training Manager

I feel that the following is information that any one who uses a microwave oven to heat water should be made aware of.

About five days ago my 26-year old son decided to have a cup of instant coffee. He took a cup of water and put it in the microwave to heat it up (something that he had done numerous times before). I am not sure how long he set the timer for but he told me he wanted to bring the water to a boil. When the timer shut the oven off, he removed the cup from the oven. As he looked into the cup he noted that the water was not boiling but instantly the water in the cup "blew up" into his face. The cup remained intact until he threw it out of his hand but all the water had flew out into his face due to the buildup of energy. His whole face is blistered and he has 1st and 2nd degree burns to his face which may leave scarring. He also may have lost partial sight in his left eye.

While at the hospital, the doctor who was attending to him stated that this a fairly common occurrence and water (alone) should never be heated in a microwave oven. If water is heated in this manner, something should be placed in the cup to diffuse the energy such as a wooden stir stick, tea bag, etc. It is however a much safer choice to boil the water in a tea kettle. Please pass this information on to friends and family.

Received by e-mail
Provided by:
Marlys Cain
Office Manager

Focus on remedies, not faults.
Jack Nicklaus
Professional golfer

A couple neat Web Sites...

www.senada.com

Notify guests of your next party in style. This electronic invitation will add class to your bash!

calendar.yahoo.com

If you don't already have a calendar online, this site will help organize your life. It is a free service that will track all of your appointments, birthdays, and phone numbers so you don't have to!!

www.smarterliving.com

If you fly frequently or are just looking for a reasonably priced airline ticket for a vacation, check out this site. You will receive a weekly E-mail update detailing the cheap flights leaving airports near you. Traveling made easy and cheap!

What... Us Worry?

Reprinted from: *Time Magazine Dec. 6, 1999*

> Your companions are like the buttons on an elevator.
>
> They will either take you up - or they will take you down.

Despite a year full of news on natural disasters, from storms to fires to earthquakes, emergency preparedness is not a high family-agenda item. Half of Americans believe a disaster is not likely to strike their home (including 30% of those already hit), and 55% haven't even discussed disaster planning with their families (including 37% of those already victimized). An Independent Insurance Agents of American poll found that such planning is most neglected (69%) in the Northeast and least neglected (45%) in the West.

Submitted by:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Rep

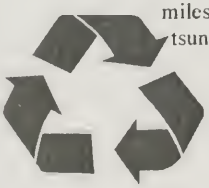
Yeah...

I got your safety plan right here!

Reprinted from: *Anchorage Daily News, Nov. 28, 1999*

Valdez -- Some 200 residents in the town nearest the greatest earthquake ever to strike North America threw away the city's new emergency plan earlier this month, believing it was junk mail, Police Chief Joe Michaud said. The plan, bulk-mailed to Valdez's 2,500 households on Nov. 15, details what to do and what not to do in case of major fire, flood, earthquake or tsunami. The plan was a revision of an older one that hadn't been updated since 1984.

Michaud said he knows how many emergency plans were pitched because he counted them. The city put a plastic recycling tub in the post office after the mailing. A sign on the tub asked folks who didn't want their pamphlets to toss them in. About 200 people obliged. The pamphlets cost the city about $1 each. "They were kind of spendy." Michaud said. The epicenter of the 1964 9.2 magnitude quake was 55 miles west of Valdez. It triggered an underwater landslide and tsunami that killed 31 people and destroyed the original townsite.



Submitted by:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Rep

2000 MADESC President's Award
Kim Potter Memorial

Presented February 10, 2000 By:
MADESC President, Butch Renders

Congratulations!
Norm Parrent & Bill Thomas

The gentlemen I present this award to today exemplify what the ***Kim Potter Memorial Award*** stands for. First and foremost loyalty and dedication to DES and the DES Association - true friends to local government - and individuals who give 100% of themselves to the Montana Emergency Management Program. They have been dues-paying members of the Association for years and continuously supported the ideals, goals and purposes of the Association serving on numerous committees and task forces. As true friends to local government, state employees who can always be counted on to be there to help if you ask, regardless of what district you are in. I picked these two gentlemen to receive this year's Montana Association of Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinators, Kim Potter Memorial Plaque. Norm Parrent and Bill Thomas have probably seen more of us through more rough times than any of us would care to add up. Both of these gentlemen are very knowledgeable in their jobs, as well as ours. They are highly respected by their peers, most of the time, although they may not always agree. I chose these two somewhat symbolically for what the "The District Representatives" stand for as the liaison between state and locals. These two symbolize in so many ways all my friends out there, from the State Office, all the Jims, Dans and Freds, my friend from southern Montana, Steve, Jens, Dave, Homer, Jerry, Bill and most importantly the ladies Marlys, Monique and I still count Gail. AND, you other District Reps. When you guys have the experience these two have, I know you are all saying you'll retire long before that, but THANK YOU Bob, Ed, Charlie and Mark. Keep trying, you can get there. These people function to support us, for that I thank them and thank you to their boss the General and his boss the Governor.

"Norm Parrent and Bill Thomas have probably seen more of us through more rough times than any of us would care to add up".

And you Commissioners out there need to know that the DES Coordinator or Emergency Manager you have in your community is supported by all this, whether she or he is working five to ten hours per week or 50 to 60 hours to get the job done. With that I better get off my soap box and tell these two fine young men "Thank you".

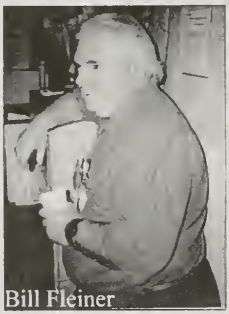
Submitted by:
Butch Renders
MADESC President

Some people say: "Your win some and you lose some."
I say: "You win som and you learn some."
Barry Johnson

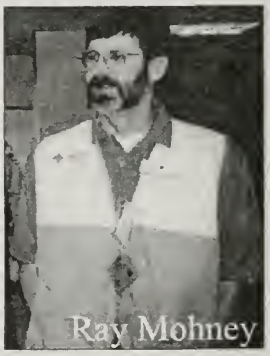
Y2K

Aaaahhhhhh!! Just when you thought you would never hear or see this annoying reference again, it's back. On December 28, 1999, Jim Greene activated the SECC Millenium Staff to oversee the activities that transitioned us into the new year. As expected, the activation was an eventful non-event. To keep things fun (and to keep us coherent during those long shifts) we placed cameras throughout the Emergency Coordination Center. Take a look at the fun we had...

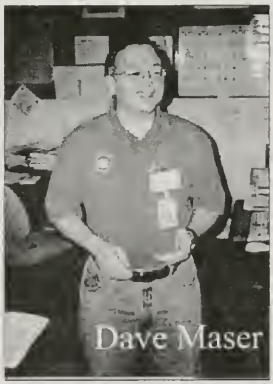
Dan McGowan

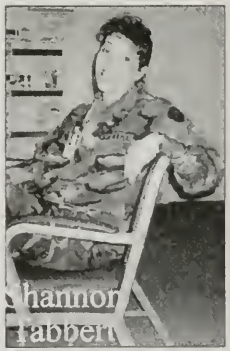

Bill Fleiner

Pictured from left-to-right: The A Team
Not Shown : The B Team


Ray Mohney

Melissa Oleson


Dave Maser


Shannon Tabbert

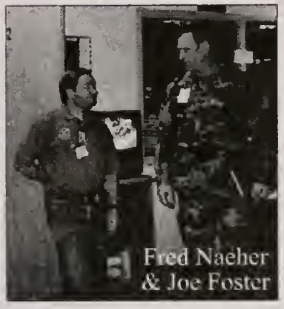
Bill Craft & Homer Young

Photographs Courtesy of: SECC Millenium Staff

A Team

SCO	Jim Greene
ECC Manager	Steve Knecht
PIO	Fred Naeher
Support	Marlys Cain
PSC	Bill O'Brien
LSC	Mike Hopkinson
COML	Homer Young
FSC	Dan Lieberg
OPS	Larry Akers

Gail Dreher

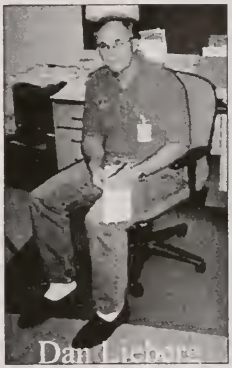

Fred Naeher & Joe Foster

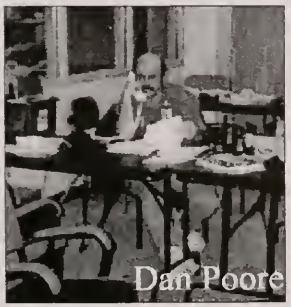
(Kine) Kevin Cavanaugh

Fred Cowie

B Team

SCO	Jim Greene
ECC Manager	Dave Maser
PIO	Monique Lay
Support	Kevin Cavanaugh
PSC	Dan McGowan
LSC	Dan Poore
COML	Jens Bolstad
FSC	Gail Dreher
OPS	Fred Cowie


Dan Lieberg


Dan Poore

Homer Woslager

Photographs Courtesy of: SECC Millenium Staff

Personnel list for Y2K SECC Activation

DES Staff	Jim Greene, Steve Knecht, Marlys Cain, Fred Naeher, Dan Lieberg, Larry Akers, Homer Young, Dave Maser, Monique Lay, Dan McGowan, Dan Poore, Fred Cowie, Jens Bolstad
District Representatives	Bill Thomas - Missoula, Ed Gierke - Great Falls, Bob Fry - Livingston, Norm Parrent - Miles City, Charlie Hanson - Billings, Mark Gruener - Lewistown
Temp Hire	Bill Fleiner
National Guard	Kevin Cavanaugh
Veteran's Affairs	Herbie Woslager
Military Affairs	Gail Dreher
DNRC	Col. Randy Mosely
American Red Cross	Ray Mohney
National Weather Service	Rick Dittman, Joe Goudsward
Highway Patrol	Lt. Col. Shawn Driscoll
Associated Press	Ellie Moon, Bob Anez, Len Iwanski
Transportation	Pat Brannon
Public Health & Human Services	Drew Dawson
Montana Power Company	Gary McWhorter
Administration	Scott Lockwood, Derrek Scoble
Fire Training School	Steve Hester
RACES	Bill Kornec, Bill Erdhardt, Bill Craft, Jim Haslip, Wesley Rowe, Mike McGatey, Cliff Smith
FEMA	Mike Hopkinson, Bill O'Brien, John Walsh
Justice - Computer Center	Rich Senden, Scott Ecklund, Dan Kavanaugh, Brett Penner, Ray Crowder, Vonnie Schatz, Carolin Combest Additions: Joe Mazurek, Larry Fasbender, Art Pembroke, Dan Hawkins, Karen Nelson, Tom Woodgerd, Shawn Kornec
Highway Patrol Dispatch	Butch Condon, Leslie Fisher, Rose Fitzpatrick, Ron Boswell, Marriah Southgate, Anne Newman, Terri Grisgby, Mitzi Brown, Randy Yeager, Charlie Larson

Y2K taught us a lot....

Janet & Don Lieber

Jim Greene

Steve Knecht

Fred Naeher

but we had fun when it was over.

Photographs Courtesy of: SECC Millenium Staff

PROJECT IMPACT COMMUNITIES VISIT WASHINGTON D. C.

After weeks and months of helping their communities become disaster resistant, several Montanan's had the opportunity to attend the 1999 Project Impact Summit Conference in Washington D. C. The Summit Conference brought together the 185 communities around the nation that have been fortunate enough to receive the Project Impact designation. It also brought together high-ranking officials from state and federal governments. Many of the national level partners from the private sector were also in attendance. I like to think of the Summit, the exposure to our Capital, and the commradmenship with other attendees as an opportunity to say thanks to our local officials and project people who have worked so hard all year.

Project Impact is a concept that began in 1997 when FEMA set aside special funding for seven pilot communities. These were communities that had been devastated by some natural disaster, were in the recovery phase and were implementing mitigation efforts to avoid such damage in the future. In 1998 FEMA asked each of the other 43 states to nominate one community. We nominated Libby/Lincoln County, Montana. Our pilot community went on to become the first 1998 community to be approved and completely funded. For 1999 our Project Impact Community is Lewis and Clark County. For the FY-2000 program it is Yellowstone County.

We are currently awaiting FEMA's announcement of the 2001 program. Once the program is announced this office will again send letters to all DES Coordinators and County Commissioners encouraging them to apply for the program. Site visits and Project Impact applicant briefings will be conducted over the spring and summer of 2000.

Attendees at the 1999 Summit Conference included Cynthia Fahland from Lincoln Co, Commissioner Mike Murray and Pat McKelvey from Lewis and Clark County, Commissioner J. A. (Ziggy) Ziegler and Larry McCain from Yellowstone County, Jim Greene and the undersigned from the State of Montana.

Prepared by:
Larry Akers
Hazard Mitigation Officer

Update on NEMA Accreditation Plans

This article appeared in the IAEM Bulletin (Jan. 2000). IAEM is the International Association of Emergency Managers

The first meeting of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) Steering Committee was held on Dec. 14, with IAEM participating as a member. The purpose of the steering committee is to provide guidance and input into the development and implementation of a national standards and accreditation program for state and local governments. Other members of the committee include the National Governors' Association, the Council of State Governments, FEMA and the National League of Cities.

According to Trina Hembree, NEMA Executive Director, NEMA "expects to have a first draft of national standards available for discussion at the NEMA Annual Conference in August 2000. This will be followed by an alpha test with one state in late 2000, beta tests in 2001, and full implementation of the program in 2002."

Future plans also include hiring a full-time program coordinator, seeking marketing opportunities, securing additional funding, establishing an EMAP web site, and developing EMAP guidance and reference manuals.

Submitted by:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Rep

Accreditation Standards

Since accreditation standards have been adopted by the DES Association, now is the time to check your files and decide if you would like to participate. Unfortunately, there are approximately 2½ years of training data that is missing from the State training data base. It would easiest if participants could mail in copies of their records. We will present accreditation certificates at the Fall Conference.

The current standards are all follows:

Mandatory: Completion of the the Orientation to State DES course and Principles of Emergency Management Course within 18 months of being hired. Those coordinators who were hired prior to July 1, 1997 are exempt from this requirement, but are strongly encouraged to participate in training.

Voluntary: Participation will be voluntary. There are no deadline dates for completion. All Emergency Managers/ DES Coordinators will be encouraged to negotiate with their County Commissioners the time and travel to attend training. Training requests should also appear on the annual Statement of Work and Training Needs Assessments. All approved programs in this plan will be funded (travel, motel, per diem) by the State DES Training Policy, based on the availability of funding. Nothing in this proposal will alter or change the existing DES program standards.

A. Emergency Planning (new and improved 2 day course)

B. Exercise Design (new and improved 2 day course)

C. Hazardous Materials Awareness (4 hour course)

D. Weather Observation (Severe Weather Spotter- 4 hour course)

E. One of the following:

1. Standards of Survival for Wildfires

2. Winter Survival

3. First Aid, CPR

4. Continuation with a Professional Development Series course or a course that will supplement your field of expertise in emergency management.

If any questions, please call Fred Naeher, 406-841-3968 or e-mail: fnaeher@state.mt.us

Submitted by:
Fred Naeher
DES Training Manager

County Updates

Big Horn County:
Dispatch: (406) 665-9780

Blaine County:
Deputy Kraig Hansen
Phone Number: (406) 367-3691
Cell Number : (406) 799-0977
Fax Number: (406) 357-2199

Broadwater County:
Pager Number : (406) 438-0599

Carbon County:
New Deputy Coordinator: Albert Brown
Business Phone: (406) 446-1595
Fax Number: (406) 446-2640
Dispatch: (406) 446-1234

District VI:
FAX number: (406) 538-6776

Fergus/Phillips County:
Cell Number : (406) 366-0260
Flip Phone: (406) 366-0261
Backup Phone: (406) 366-0262

Gallatin County:
New Deputy Coordinator - Jason Shrauger
Car Phone: (406) 581-0015
Cell Phone: (406) 581-4295

Jefferson County:
Pat McKelvey's Cell Number : (406) 949-2184

Lewis & Clark County:
Pat McKelvey's Cell Number : (406) 949-2184

Mineral County:
George M. Guption
P.O. Box 870
110 Second Avenue, East
Superior, MT 59872
Business Number: (406) 822-4388
Cell Number : (406) 544-5383
Other Number: (406) 327-8956
E-Mail: lgvent@montana.com

New Deputy Coordinator: Diana Case
P.O. Box 426
Superior, MT 59872
Work Number: (406) 822-3719

Park County:
Belinda Van Nurden's New Number : (40

Powder River County:
David Lancaster
P.O. Box 191
Broadus, MT 59317
Business Number : (406) 436-2297
Fax Number: (406) 436-2866
24 Hr. Dispatch: (406) 436-2333
e-mail: jclancaster@mcn.net

Richland County:
Business Number: (406) 433-2220
24 Hour Number : (406) 433-2919
Fax Number: (406) 433-6952
24 Hour Fax Number: (406) 433-4766
e-mail: Butch_Renders@msulink.monta a
Deputy Con Donovan's Number: (406) 43

Roosevelt County:
416½ 2nd Avenue South
Wolf Point, MT 59201
24 Hour Number : (406) 653-6212

Stillwater County:
Cell Number : (406) 321-0959

23-0165

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Remember

The @mt.gov domain previously used for our state email addresses will expire on March 30, 2000. Please update your addresses to reflect the new domain:

@state.mt.us

Visit Our DES Web Site at...
www.state.mt.us/dma/des

March 8	Ash Wednesday
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 20	First Day of Spring
April 2	Daylight Savings
April 16	Palm Sunday
April 17	Individual Tax Returns Due
April 20	1st Day of Passover
April 21	Good Friday
April 23	Easter
April 26	Secretaries Day
May 14	Mother's Day
May 20	Armed ForcesDay
May 29	Memorial Day

Board!

Spring HOLIDAYS!

e-mail Updates:

Glacier County
Jim King ..... jimdesking@netscape.net
Sanders County
Martha Smith ..... msmith@metnet.state.mt.us
Teton County
Dick Van Auken ..... dva@3rivers.net
Wheatland County
Les Christensen ..... wcso@mcn.net

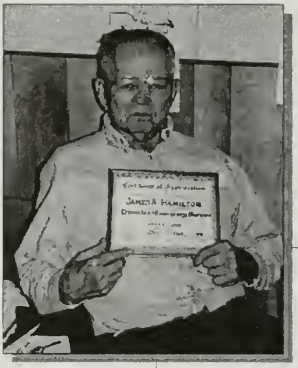
During restoration of the Capital, please send correspondence to the Governor at the following address:

Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Out & About

What's happening in Montana.

Photograph Provided By:
Ed Gierke
DES District II



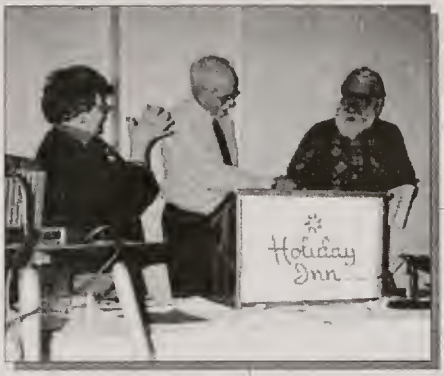
Jim Hamilton receives his Professional Development Series Certificate as well as receiving recognition for his retirement. Congratulations!

Photograph Provided By:
Jim Greene
DES Administrator

October 1, 1999: Members of District I presented Bill Thomas an award for being a "Great District Representative". The award was presented at the District Meeting by Bill Silverman (left) and was signed by Jim Greene, General Prendergast, and Governor Marc Racicot. Congratulations Bill!!

December 1, 1999: Representatives from the Republic of Krygyzstan attend the Terrorism Conference at Polson. Left-to-right: Vran Djamanov, Alexei Skrinnikov, Tanya Lukenhill (Interpreter) and General Kamchibekov and DES Administrator Jim Greene. The delegation signed an agreement with FEMA to exchange visits related to emergency management issues. The delegation represented the Ministry of Emergencies and Civil Defense. Major General Kamchibekov gave an update on the recent terrorist activities in Krygyzstan.

Photograph Provided By:
Bill Thomas, DES District I



Photograph Provided By:
Monique T. Lay
Honorary Mick Mills Fan

Mick Mills (center) receives recognition for his many years of service and dedication to Disaster and Emergency Services. Representatives of the Association, Wilma Puich and Butch Renders, honor him following his presentation at this year's Governor's Conference. Congratulations, Mick, and thank you for all you have done to bring honor and credibility to emergency management in Montana.

January 2000: Powell County Coordinator "Bart Barton in his office on a bad hair day.

Photographs Provided By:
Bill Thomas
DES District I

December 9, 1999: Butte/Silver Bow County Emergency Manager Wilma Puich is presented the ACE (Acknowledging County Excellence) Award by Chief Executive Jack Lynch.

(Don't look so surprised, Wilma. You deserve it!!)

Photographs Provided By:
Norm Parrent
DES District IV Rep

Pictured Left-to-Right: Deb Ranum, Santa "Butch" Renders, and Helen Conradsen.

Pictured Left-to-Right: Norm Parrent - DES District IV Representative, and Santa "Butch" Renders.

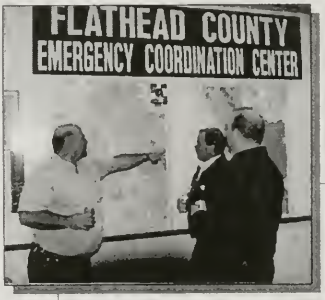
Pictured Left-to-Right: Jim Zabrocki and Santa "Butch" Renders.

Top 5 Causes of Fatal Home Fires

- Smoking (820 Deaths)
- Arson (610 Deaths)
- Heaters (480 Deaths)
- Children playing with lighters/ matches/candles (370 Deaths)
- Electrical systems (350 Deaths)

Fact: Only 25% of the home-fire victims die from burns; smoke inhalation is the major killer.

Source: National Fire Protection Association: latest annual figures for the United States.



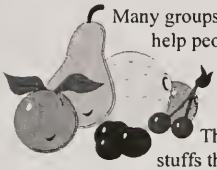
Photograph Provided By:
Bill Thomas
DES District I

December 6, 1999: Deputy Coordinator Lynn Ogle points out an interesting feature to Flathead County Coordinator of the Office of Emergency Services, Alan Marble, and recently appointed Ravalli County Coordinator Bruce Hennell. The trip around the NW corner of the state was primarily an orientation and fact-gathering tour for Bruce H. who is reconfiguring the Ravalli County ECC. Steps were also made on the Flathead Reservation, and in Lake County, Lincoln County and Sanders County.

Out & About

Disaster Planning for Vegetarians

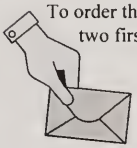
BALTIMORE (AP) - It may be a blizzard in the Northeast, a hurricane in the South, a tornado in the Midwest or an earthquake in the West. It leaves the household without electricity and perhaps without water. These are all situation covered by a booklet titled "Disaster Planning for Vegetarians."



Many groups and sources offer recommendations designed to help people plan for or recover from such disasters. But sometimes those suggestions are not acceptable for vegens or other vegetarians.

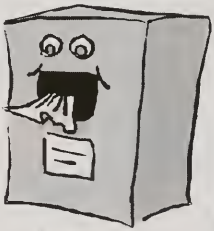
The free, four-page handout gives a sample menu for a family of four using foodstuffs that don't need refrigeration, cooking or water to make. Also included is a list of what can go in a three-day food supply for a family disaster kit.

If you have a safe cooking source, the handout says, you can prepare simple hot foods such as canned soups, packaged soups or meals "in a cup,' instant mashed potatoes and dry mixes for humus or refried beans.



To order the booklet, send a self-addressed envelope with two first-class stamps to:

Disaster Planning
The Vegetarian Resource Group
P.O. Box 1463
Baltimore, MD 21203



Here's an interesting site. It includes tons of photos from various earthquakes throughout the world.

http://nisee.ce.berkeley.edu/eqiis.html

Received from:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Rep

http://www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/

A curriculum for K-8 teachers to use to integrate disaster safety concepts into their regular lesson plans.

Developed by the American Red Cross with generous support from the Allstate Foundation.

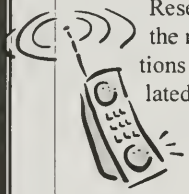
Good Disaster Management

This is the sixth in a series of articles summarized from ***"Ten Criteria for Evaluating the Management of Community Disasters"*** by E.L. Quarantelli, Co-Director of the Disaster Research Center of the University of Delaware.

Principle 5

Allow the adequate processing of information

"Communications is always a problem" is a comment frequently heard during disasters and at critiques following disaster drills. Heads nod in agreement even though the speaker virtually never spells out what he/she means by "communication". Listeners usually assume that the speaker is referring to hardware, that is more radios were needed, more channels were necessary and so on.



Research indicates, however, that the most significant communications problems in a disaster are related not to how communications takes place, but rather to <u>what</u> is communicated.

During a disaster there are multiple streams of information:

1) within every responding organization,
2) between organizations,
3) from citizens to organizations, and
4) from organizations to citizens.

Each of these streams can become problems in disasters. For example, to look just at communications within an existing organization, the communications system is designed to process and exchange predetermined types and quantities of information. However, during a disaster, the channeling of information in the organization becomes more complex. For example, several individuals might occupy a work position previously held only by one person, or officials might assume non-routine tasks, or officials might be reassigned to work in temporary emergency positions within the organization. These situations mean that sometimes the normal channels of information flow are insufficient to ensure that all relevant information gets to those needing to be informed.

Given all this, it is possible to evaluate the adequacy of information flow in a disaster. If organizations and/or citizens did not get the information they needed, clearly the disaster managing was not as it should have been. Of course, there can be adequate information in any of the four streams mentioned above, so each must be judged independent of one another.

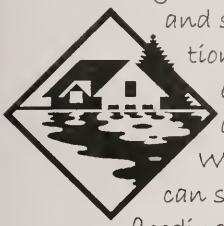
Contributed By:
Bill Thomas
DES District I Rep

Don't forget to view the Region VIII Newsletter online at:
http://www.fema.gov/reg-viii/index.htm

Being Prepared for Floods

Response efforts during floods are usually stressful and chaotic. A little preparedness before the flood can make your response more effective, and most importantly, can reduce flood damages.

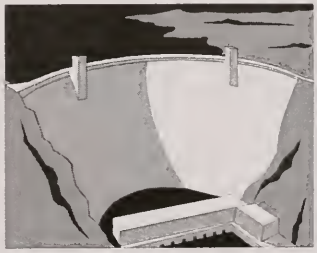
Floods in Montana are generally caused by a combination of snowmelt and spring rains. The duration of the flood can be anywhere from several days to several weeks. When ice jams form, they can significantly worsen flooding and they also make it harder to predict where the flood will occur. Flash floods can take place in the smaller drainage areas. And although these floods are short in duration, they are very unpredictable.



One of the keys to being ready for a flood is having a good comprehensive flood plan in place. For local communities, the plan should identify the command and control, available resources, communications systems, and safety plan. In addition, be sure to include basic flood fight strategies for your area. In some cases evacuation is appropriate; other situations require sandbagging or other structural measures. Identify contractors and volunteers who will be available for flood fighting and provide appropriate training and equipment.

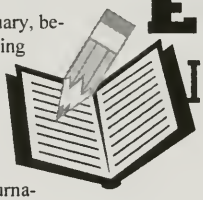
Prior to the flood season, necessary supplies such as sandbags, sand, plastic sheeting, and shovels should be stockpiled. Flood control structures should be inspected, and potential problem areas such as log jams or erosion sites identified so they can be monitored during flood events. Preventative measures such as levee maintenance and flood-proofing of homes will also save you time and money down the road.

Authored by: Doug Weber
US Army Corps of Engineers
Seattle District



Emergency

Is Your School Prepared?



It's 1:00 p.m. on a day in January, below zero, and snow is beginning to accumulate around the school buildings. The forecast calls for 80% chance that the snow will continue throughout the day. The high school wrestling and volleyball teams have left for tournaments in towns 60 and 90 miles away on three of the school district's seven buses. All occupants from the elementary school have been evacuated without injury.

250 students and teachers are standing in the parking lot. It's snowing, the only source of communication, the school phones, are inside the evacuated building, and not everyone grabbed their coat. Someone is going to need insulin soon. Now what?

What happens "beyond the parking lot"? Do you know if your school is prepared?

"Parents often assume that schools have appropriate emergency plans in place. Unfortunately, many schools in Montana have no emergency plans beyond the parking lot".

Once the children have been evacuated to the parking lot, in many cases, there has not been further planning for what happens. Schools need to plan for all hazards facing them today, such as hazardous materials incidents, violence, severe weather, and earthquakes (Montana is the fourth most seismically active state in the nation!)

Montana law MCA 20-1-410 sections 1 and 2 requires a board of trustees to identify the local hazards that exist within the boundaries of its school district and design a specified number of drills (four must be fire drills, four of another type) to address those hazards.

Out of concern for the safety of children who attend school, the Montana Association of Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinators has established a School Disaster Preparedness Resource Committee to provide a knowledgeable point of contact with experienced personnel that can assist a school district in all hazard emergency preparedness planning. This committee serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources concerning plans and the planning process.

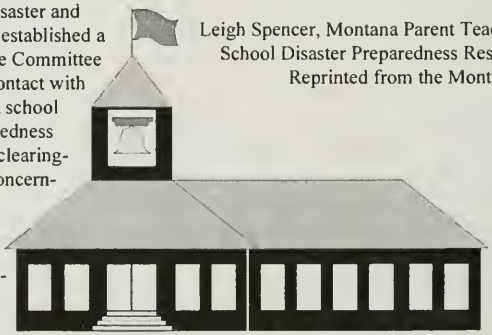
The Montana Office of Public Instruction, the Montana School Boards Association, and the Montana PTA are all represented on this committee.

It is crucial that the plans be facility-specific (a plan designed for Noon, Montana, taking into account the possibility of a dam failure in its list of local hazards, would not work in Ekalaka). Parents often assume that schools have appropriate emergency plans in place. Unfortunately, many schools in Montana have no emergency plans beyond the parking lot. As a result, some dangerous situations have occurred.

The best crafters of a facility-specific plan are those responsible and most knowledgeable about the facility - school district personnel and building administrators. Brad Belke, a Butte attorney and noted authority on disaster law, states that school districts and the government units behind the school districts can be held liable in all types of situations, including natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods.

While parents are encouraged to participated in discussions of emergency and disaster plans, this is not a PTA or parent project. It is the responsibility of those who are liable and accountable for emergency planning. Help for school districts and building administrators is available from the School Disaster Preparedness Resource Committee and community emergency and disaster managers. Plans developed by more than one person are desirable and encouraged as increased participation usually makes for a better, more complete, and more widely accepted plan. Spread the word!

Written by:
Leigh Spencer, Montana Parent Teachers Association
School Disaster Preparedness Resource Committee
Reprinted from the Montana PTA Bulletin

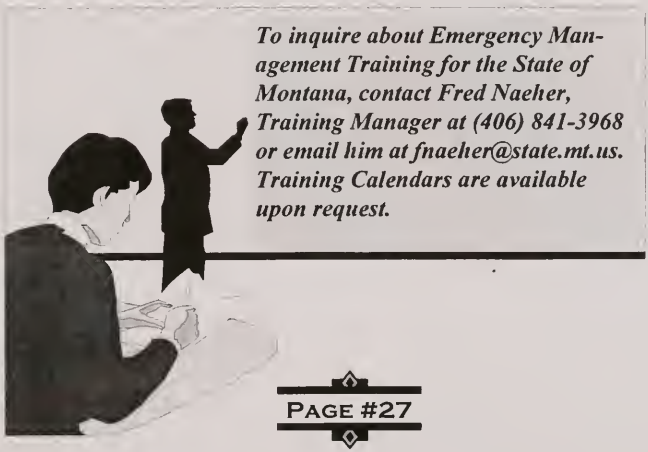


Just a reminder

What's out there?

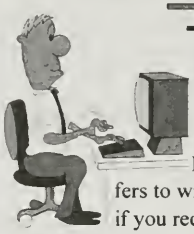
The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Manageemnt Institute offers numerous courses that can be taken individually through its Independent Study Web Page: http://www.fema.gov/home/emi/ishome.ht. Alternatevely, one can contact FEMA, Emergency Management Institute, Independent Study Program, 16825 South Seton Aveneu, Emmitsbure, MD 21727-8998; (301) 447-1000. Courses currently offered include:

IS-1 Emergency Program Manager: An Orientation to the Position
IS-2 Emergency Preparedness, USA
IS-3 Radiological Emergency Management
IS-5 Hazardous Materials: A Citizen's Orientation
IS-7 A Citizen's Guide to Disaster Assistance
IS-8 Building for the Earthquakes of Tomorrow: Complying with Executive Order 12699
IS-10 Animals in Disaster - Module A Awareness and Preparedness
IS-11 Animals in Disaster - Module B Community Planning
IS-120, An Orientation to Community Disaster Exercises
IS-195 Basic Incident Command System
IS-275 The EOC's Role in Community Preparedness, Response and Recovery Activities
IS-279 Engineering Principles and Practices for Retrofitting Flood-Prone Residential Structures
IS-288 The Role of Voluntary Agencies in Emergency Management
IS-301 Radiological Emergency Response
IS-324 Community Hurricane Preparedness
IS-346 An Orientation to Hazardous Materials for Medical Personnel
IS-393 Introduction to Mitigation
IS-394 Mitigation for Homeowners
IS-513 The Professional in Emergency Management
SS-534: Emergency Response to Terrorism (presented by the National Fire Academy-12 hours)



To inquire about Emergency Management Training for the State of Montana, contact Fred Naeher, Training Manager at (406) 841-3968 or email him at fnaeher@state.mt.us. Training Calendars are available upon request.

Pass this message on immediately....



You Could Win...

Have you received any e-mail messages that said SERIOUS WARNING!! Do you get e-mail chain letters or offers to win money on the internet if you pass on a message? Even if you receive them from someone you know...**Beware!!**

Our Computer Specialist, Homer Young, says:

"These are hoax warnings. Hoax warnings are typically scare alerts started by malicious people and passed on by innocent users who think they are helping by spreading the warning".

"Please check and verify the alert before forwarding it to anyone."
-Homer Young

So what should we do?

"Do not forward hoax messages," he says. "E-mail systems can collapse if dozens of users forward a false alert to everybody they know. End users should not forward virus alarms. If a virus alarm is received, forward it to your IT [Information Technology] Specialist but not to anyone else".

Serious Warning!!!

"If you do not have an IT specialist, you can check to see if the alert is a hoax by going to **www.datafellows.com** on the internet. Please check and verify the alert before forwarding it to anyone."

Some tips in spotting a Web Hoax

- ***Who sent the message?*** Chances are, if the original sender is missing from the E-mail message, it is a hoax.
- Does it encourage you to ***"Pass it on"*** to everyone you know. This is another giveaway. The sender's main goal is for these annoying messages to reach as many people as possible.
- ***Does it make sense?*** If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If it sounds too horrible, you will catch it in the news.
- ***Is there a Web-site connection?*** A real message often includes a Web address that you can visit to verify the information that is being sent.

If you receive spam mail from a company which includes a request to have you deleted from their mailing list, do not respond. By responding, you validate your address which can then be used by the company and sold to e-businesses. Your address is worth big bucks on the net. At approximately 6¢ per address, a collection could quickly mean large profits for these scamming companies. Surfer Beware!

When criticized,
Consider the source.

Reminder:

Upcoming courses:

Exercise Design Course:
Wolf Point, March 22-23 - Contact Fred Naeher at 841-3968 or Dan Sietsema at 653-6224 for details. Registration Deadline: March 10

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparation
Billings, April 4-6. Contact Fred Naeher at 841-3968 or visit our web site: www.state.mt.us/dma/des look under training. Registration Deadline: March 24.

Governor's Conference 2000

The Disaster and Emergency Services Division held their 33rd annual Governor's Conference February 7-11, 2000 and it was a resounding success. The enticing agenda and ideal weather conditions coupled to bring together an outstanding attendance. As anticipated, "2000 and Beyond" was well-received by its participants and prompted many opportunities for better emergency management in Montana.

Homer Young

Although there were many highlights, one of the best experiences was hearing the speakers from Littleton, Colorado. As we listened to the traumas they faced while responding to the shootings at Columbine, it became apparent we have a lot of work to do here in our state. Both knowledge and experiences were tapped as several questions were asked and insightfully answered.

Additionally, we addressed School Planning, Individual and Organization Behavior in Disasters, Terrorism, and a multitude of other interesting topics, including the weather! The training was inspiring and the networking was beneficial. As always, we continue to improve emergency management throughout the State of Montana as we work collectively to achieve our common goals.

Take a look at some of the people who are committed to making our conference a success!

Jim Anderson

Photographs Courtesy of: DES Staff

Photographs
Courtesy of:
DES Staff

2000 and Beyond

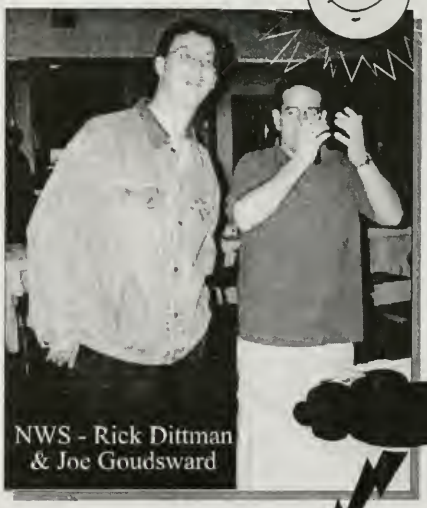
Governor's Conference 2000

Bernie Barton
& Mick Mills

Photographs Courtesy of: DES Staff

Coordinators are encouraged to check out the recently revised and expanded Flathead County Office of Emergency Services website at http://www.digisys.net/oes/. There's a lot of generic disaster information on the site of use to every county in the state. Kudos to coordinator Alan Marble for the development of an outstanding website.

Bill Thomas
DES District I


NWS - Rick Dittman
& Joe Goudsward

THANKS!

To the many organizations who support
our conference and contribute to the
betterment of emergency management.

Alster Communications

American Red Cross: Big Sky Chapter

Environmental Systems Research Institute

E-Provisions

Fire Services Training School

Humane Society of the United States

International Conference of Building Officials

Montana Operation Lifesaver

Montana Utility Coordinating Council

National Weather Service

Olympus Technical Services

Small Business Administration

State of Montana

Department of Commerce

The Montana Treasure State Endowment Program

Disaster and Emergency Services Division

Disaster and Emergency Services Division: Project Impact

DNRC Fire & Aviation Management Bureau

Have you had a Happy Dash?

As most of you do, I receive a barrage of e-mail everyday. Occassionally, I receive someething that truly touches my heart. As the goal of this newsletter is to not only help make us better emergency managers, but to also help us grow as individuals, I decided to share a couple of them with you. I hope they provoke as many thoughts and ideas for you as they have for me.

Monique

I read of a man who stood up to speak
at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on her tombstone
from beginning to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth
and spoke the following date with tears.

But said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
that she had spent alive on the earth.

And now only those who loved her know
what that little line is worth.

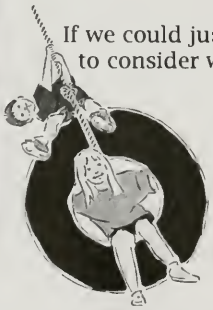
For it matters not how much we own,
the cars, the house, the cash —

What matters most is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.

So think about it long and hard...
are there things you'd like to change?

For you never know how much time is left
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
to consider what is true and real,



And try to understand
the way people feel.

Be less quick to anger
and show appreciation more,

And love the people in our lives
like we've never loved them before.

Treat each other with respect
and more often wear a smile,

Remembering this special dash
might only last a while.

So when your eulogy is being read,
with your life's actions to rehash,

Would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spent your dash?

Author Unknown

When Our Wings Have Trouble...

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties - a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives." He looked at me and said, "Hey thanks!" There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude.

I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes.

We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends thought the same of him. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "Damn boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!" He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak.

Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than me and all the girls loved him! Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days. I could see he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me, smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth.

Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. "Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly."

-Author Unknown

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The Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Disaster and Emergency Services Division. It is funded, in part, by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Contributions of articles and ideas are welcomed and encouraged. The deadlines for submitting articles for the 1999 editions are: February 15 for the March issue; May 15 for the June issue; August 15 for the September issue and November 15 for the December issue. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. The articles in this newsletter do not constitute official policy.

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500 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of $1.30 per copy, for a total cost of $650.00, which includes $650.00 for printing and $.00 for distribution.

This publication has been financed, in whole or in part, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.